

## Selection.

BY JOHN B. TABB.

Among the trees, O God,  
Is there not one  
That with unrivaled love  
Thou lookest upon?  
And of all blessed birds,  
Hath not thy Love  
Found for its fittest mate  
The homing dove?  
Or, 'mid the flame of flowers  
That light the land,  
Doth not the lily first  
Before thee stand?  
So says my soul, O God,  
The type of thee.  
'In each life-circle, one  
Was made for me.'

## Not Looking Backward but Forward.

SERMON BY ALLEN MILLER.

TEXT: 'No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.' Luke 9: 62.

What do you think of this text for an answer? Once upon a time when Christ was going up to Jerusalem he was met by a man who addressed him thus, 'Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go and bid them which are at my home in my house farewell.' Let us look at this for a moment and see what it embraces. Notice that the man recognized Christ as Lord for he so addressed him, 'Lord, I will follow thee.' The man also gave his declaration that he would follow him, for he said, 'Lord, I will follow thee.' 'But,' said he 'let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house.' Only a trifling request, a mere favor asked, simply going and bidding farewell to the people at his house; his relatives and friends. But listen to the reply of Jesus: 'No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.' I ask you again, what do you think of this text for an answer?

The theme which this text furnishes is one of importance. And I would impress upon the minds and hearts of each individual present, especially professing Christians, that there is danger in looking back. In the first age when humanity seems to be running away with itself; when the signs of the times indicate the astonishing prevalence of immorality, debauchery and crime; when men of intellect and influence will rise in banded hordes in opposition to the progress of the Christian religion; when persons who profess to be followers of the Lowly Nazarine allow themselves to be 'tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness,' it behooves us to sound the alarm of danger. Oh, that every watchman on the walls of Zion would proclaim in stentorian tones the fatality of 'looking back.' Not looking backward but forward must be the motto of every child of God, for 'no man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

The text involves one of the grandest principles in the universe of God. The old Romans had a motto which gives the substance of my text; it was, 'No footsteps backward.' If the act of looking back disqualifies one for the kingdom of God, then progression must be the means of fitting one for the same. Paul who stands out as a star of infinite magnitude in the bright galaxy of great men said, 'Forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press on toward the mark.' This sublime saying of this profoundest of men illustrates the very foundation law of the universe of God. The onward steps of God in the creation can everywhere be read. And man, the createn image of God demonstrates this principle.

\* 'Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go and bid them farewell, which are at home in my house.' 'No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.' The above was the brief conversation between our Saviour and a man of Jerusalem. Six months ago, or a year ago, or two years ago, or five years ago, or ten or twenty or thirty or fifty years ago some of you came from the wilds of sin. You had wandered far from your Father's home. You had

wasted your substance in unholy living. But one day you were enveloped in a supernatural light. Struck with amazement and awe, you fell to the ground. You were blind. Then you were carried to the feet of Jesus on the wings of prayer. And then all at once the scales fell from your eyes and you saw that you were feeding upon the husks of the devil and allowing yourselves to be chained fast by the works of darkness. Then with a mighty effort, an effort aided by superhuman power, you declared, 'I will arise and go to my Father.' The way to our Heavenly Father is by his Son. You arose and came to Jesus, and you said, 'Lord, I will follow thee.' And right there you promised God, before men and angels, that you would love him and love your fellowmen. All this you did one, or ten or twenty or fifty years ago. Now you have grown cold. You do not feel that deep interest in your soul's welfare that you did then. Nor do you care very much about the salvation of your neighbors. And then you can not serve God fully now, nor can you be holy devoted to him just now. You work hard during six days and on the holy Sabbath, which is the Lord's day, you need the day to yourself at home. You must rest up for the following week's work. And though certain acts of obedience are necessary else you have no life in you, yet you pass them by. You ask permission to go and bid them at your home farewell, and you did not wait to get permission. You asked it and with the asking took it and it is a long farewell, you are bidding. Turn your face the other way. Cast your eyes heavenward. Look no longer behind you. I mean you who have left your first love. 'Remember from whence you are fallen, return and repent and do the first works else the Lord will come quickly and remove his candlestick out of his place.' 'He that hath an ear let him hear.' I mean you who are neither cold nor hot. Remember the Lord says, 'because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.' 'He that hath an ear let him hear.' I mean you who have a name that you live and yet are dead. 'He that hath an ear let him hear.' 'No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.' May the truth of this text be so indelibly stamped upon the heart of every one and so thoroughly implanted into the mind of all, that all the stumbling blocks in the way can not eradicate it, but shall only make each one stronger; for he that overcometh shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

Now this morning I wish to divide my congregation into three classes, or rather the Bible makes the division for me. Now, please remember this means you and that you do belong to one of these classes.

The first of these three classes, that I shall notice is the non-professor. By the non-professor, I mean that individual who does not accept Christ, either by neglect or refusal. There are some of you here whom I have all reason to believe belong to this class. Some of you have never counted the cost of your sinful life. If you have one would conclude that you thought it less than the cost of a life of holiness.

A second class that I shall notice, is the weak and sickly Christian. Christ says, 'For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it, lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.' Such are the lukewarm and indifferent professors of religion. They build the foundation, try the work—have not strength to finish it—and so are mocked by all who see it. I am sorry, but I have reason to believe that some of you belong to this class.

The third class I shall notice is the Christian. Not the Christian in word only, but the Christian in deed and in truth. They are the people who have counted the cost and said, 'by economy in building and by the grace of God we can finish the tower.' They have strength enough with ten thousand to put twenty thousand of the enemy to flight. I am glad and rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. I rejoice for I have all reason to believe that some of you belong to this class.

Now, let me speak a few minutes to the first class. I inquire first, 'Where art thou?' 'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?' Sinner what will become of you? I read in this Holy Book that the sinner is without God, without hope and without excuse. Did you ever stop to think what would become of your soul if you should suddenly be taken by death? Where would you spend your eternity? The plan of life is before us. The scroll of the future is sealed. The past is unrolled and spread to our view. I cast my eyes back along my path and down at the beginning of it I see the cradle. It is not far away. How short life is. A little farther this way I stop at a spot sacred to me. Here I see a shaft that marks the resting place of mother. And though I am two hundred and fifty miles from it this morning, yet I am standing by it. I stand by her last resting place on earth and say, 'Yes mother, I will, by the grace of God meet you in heaven.' How many of you, who are away from God, cannot see somewhere along the path of your past life the monument, marking the spot made sacred to your memory by being the resting place of a mother, or a father, or a sister, or a brother, or a little child? I venture to say few of you, very few. And did you not promise the dear ones gone before to meet them? Did you not promise yourself and God to prepare to meet them? Oh, my dear dying friend, beware. 'For if the righteous be scarcely saved where will the sinner and ungodly man appear?' You believe in God, believe also in Christ. Obey his word.

And I would have you all know that if you are lost you will it so. Salvation is free for all. I am glad that we are free moral agents. If you or I are lost we cannot blame God; for 'he has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but wills that all should come to the truth and live.' You cannot blame Christ for he says whosoever will may come. Yes, I am glad you cannot blame this grand book for it invites all. If you are lost, you will it, for, 'The spirit and the bride say come and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take of the water of life.'

Let me show you the way to the lost world. There are three steps; let me give you their names. The first is neglect. All you need to do is to neglect salvation and you will go to the lost world. You may say, 'why, what have I done?' Why you have neglected your soul's salvation. We are on a swift river. Ten miles down the river is the cataract. All who go over the falls are destroyed. We are in a skiff, pull in the oars. Fold your arms and neglect and you will go over the cataract of destruction. Fold your arms and neglect, and you will drift into eternal perdition. The name of the second step is refusal. Just neglect awhile and you will begin to refuse. If I were to come to each of you today and ask you to accept Christ, to accept eternal life, to become a Christian, you would refuse me. The last step is to despise to be a Christian. Some hate Christ. They hate Christianity. They hate Christians and churches. They hate their best friend. A few years ago they neglected; now they refuse, they soon will despise. One more step in life will take them to another world. Remember a great many die in neglect. Some are taken in refusal. Some are upon the last step despising salvation when called away.

Now, I would like to talk a few moments to the second class, namely the weak and sickly Christian. I suppose you all understand whom I mean when I say weak and sickly Christians, for I know no other term by which to designate them.

Sometime in the past you became convinced of your iniquity and sin. You fled to the Lord for mercy and pardon. He received you and you were happy. You dwelt at your Father's. You enjoyed all the privileges of a loving Father's hospitality. But finally you become dissatisfied. You went farther and farther away. You forgot the assembling of yourself with your brethren. You lost your love for your brethren, you forgot to keep the ordinances of God's house. You, instead of doing all in your power to build up the kingdom of Christ, extend the borders of Zion, did